

MEMORIAL

TO HIS EXCELLENCY

The President of the United States

FROM

The Trades League
of Philadelphia

IN RE

The Chesapeake & Delaware Canal

Adopted February 14, 1907



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Oyster Boats in St. George's Lock



The Ericsson Line.

MEMORIAL
TO HIS EXCELLENCY,
THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES
FROM
THE TRADES LEAGUE OF PHILADELPHIA
IN RE THE CHESAPEAKE & DELAWARE CANAL.
ADOPTED FEBRUARY 14, 1907.

YOUR EXCELLENCY:—

THE OBJECT

This League was organized in 1891, for the purpose of improving the interests of the Port and City of Philadelphia, which was suffering from lack of transportation facilities, due to the control of two of its canal feeders by railroad leases, and the inadequacy of the channels of the Delaware River; so that it became one of the fundamental purposes of this organization to use every effort to relieve this condition by securing a deeper channel to the sea, and to emancipate the Schuylkill navigation, the Chesapeake & Delaware and the Delaware and Raritan Canals from excessive tolls and other restrictive conditions.

The efforts to prevent the redepositing of dredged materials from the Delaware, in the bed of the stream, have at length been partially successful, and likewise the numerous memorials and hearings before Congress have born fruit in the appointment of a third Commission to “examine and appraise the value of the works and franchises of the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal—with reference to the desirability of purchasing said canal by the United States, and the construction over the route of the said canal of a free and open waterway—and to report its conclusions upon the probable cost and commercial advantages, and military and naval uses of each of said routes,” (including the one known as the Sassafra Route).

GREAT NECESSITY FOR CANALS.

For a period covering more than a century, the people of the United States have realized the great necessity of an interior waterway connecting the great bays and sounds of the Atlantic Seaboard, and up to 1829, private corporations built the small canals, some of which are still in operation between these waters.

As the population and tonnage have enormously increased, and the number and draught of coastwise vessels has, of necessity, expanded in proportion, these restricted channels have become relatively less and less available, and the tonnage has been forced to sea or has been sought after by the railroads in their efforts to meet the demands of trade. Thus the bulky, heavy freight and raw materials, such as coal, iron, lumber, ores, stone, cross-ties and many other low grade commodities, have been hauled overland at the expense of a large equipment for rolling stock, and at much higher charges than if conveyed by water.

CONGESTION OF OVERLAND TRAFFIC.

So great an incubus has this become to the railroads that many of their managers are now recognizing the necessity of segregating this class of freight, so as to hasten the movement of merchandise and food products, at higher rates, and they are now about to increase the charges on the low grade freight, which must add still more to the cost of all industrial operations, or drive this tonnage to the cheaper waterways. This evolution, due to the increase of population, renders the enlargement of the waterways still more imperative; but the real obstacle, in the way of their immediate improvement, arises from the inability to secure any definite action from the National Government.

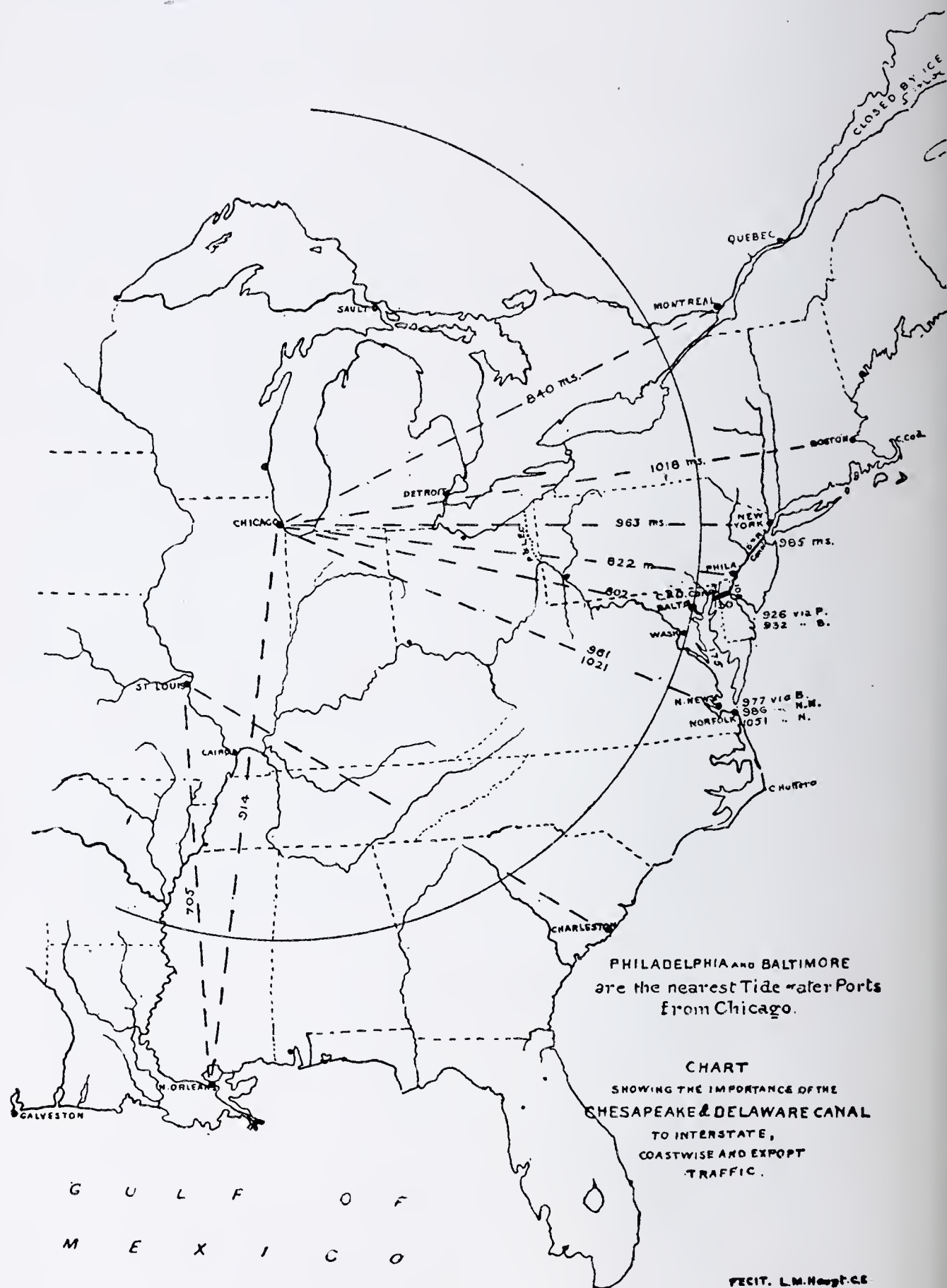
Prior to the Civil War, about \$150,000,000 were expended under State and corporate initiative, resulting in the construction of some 5000 miles of improved waterways. Since that date, \$500,000,000 have been expended for that purpose, yet the canal mileage has fallen to less than one-half of that in use in 1860, of which the Government is reported to own only about 40 miles.

LEGISLATIVE DELAYS.

So great is the demand for appropriations in the several Congressional Districts for other purposes, that many very deserving projects have slumbered in Congress for a generation or more, with no prospect of their early maturing. Amongst these, the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal, having a larger tonnage in sight than almost any canal in the world, has been in Congress for 36 years, during which time it has been urgently endorsed by three distinguished Commissions as being of vital importance to the country in the event of war, and invaluable to our domestic commerce in times of peace; yet no appropriations are available; and the fact that the Government is considering the possibility of purchasing it, deters private capital from undertaking its enlargement. The purpose of the appointment of the last Commission was to relieve this dead-lock by early action, but so far as the findings of the Commission have been made public, (the report not having been printed in full) it would appear to have added to the complications and difficulties of securing the long desired relief, because of the enlarged dimensions and consequent cost of the work, as well as by the low value placed upon the works and franchises of the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal, which must first be secured.

In the estimates submitted by the United States Engineers in 1882, it was stated that a canal 27 feet in depth, and 100 feet in width, could be built for \$7,605,471.39, while at the present time, with modern improvements, a 35 foot canal

would cost \$20,621,323.70; in short, the dimensions have so far outgrown the resources of Congress that, at this rate, there is little prospect of its ever overtaking them.



THE THIRTY-FIVE FOOT PROJECT.

The estimated amount of excavation for this one short link in the coastwise system to-day, is the enormous aggregate of 92,350,910 cubic yards, or a total approaching closely to that of the colossal Panama enterprise.

At the best rate of progress made on any of the great canals of the world, it would require from 12 to 14 years to open this channel to its full dimensions, even if there were no cross-current and sediment in the bays to refill them.

The commercial interests of the country may well take alarm at the improbability of securing early and definite action at the hands of the Government for a proposition of this magnitude.

No action will be taken upon the report of the Commission at this session of Congress, which means several years of delay before even the first step can be taken.

It may serve as a guide to the attitude of the vested interests which have so long restricted waterway legislation, to quote from the letter of Mr. Norvin Green, President of the Western Union Telegraph Co., addressed to the Secretary of War, Hon. Robert T. Lincoln, in 1882, in reference to an appropriation of \$10,000 for additional surveys for canals across this peninsula. He says:

“There is really no earthly need to make any further surveys, and the only object in putting that in the appropriation bill was to keep the subject alive and to keep up the appearance that Congress was going to build a free canal, in order to dampen and deter private enterprise.”

This was 25 years ago. Mr. Green is dead, and so is the canal, which he was anxious to build for the relief of commerce, had it not been paralyzed by the purpose, as he repeats, “to build a free canal in order to dampen and deter private enterprise.”

May not the 35 foot project just reported, have a similar dampening effect upon any hope of relief from Governmental sources, and thus the interstate commerce continue to be throttled, unless a reasonable proposition may be submitted on a business basis, which would merit the support of the patriotic citizens of this great Republic?

WANTED: A COMMERCIAL CANAL ON A BUSINESS BASIS.

Such a proposition would contemplate a waterway sufficiently large to pass barges of between 2000 or 3000 tons between the Southern and Northern Cities, and would be an extension of the Lake and Erie Canal System, with its proposed ruling depth of 14 feet (and which the State of New York is now liberally contributing to the welfare of the Nation) with the 16 foot canal which the Southern States are importuning Congress to grant them, from Norfolk to Beaufort, but thus far in vain. This project would be a boon to the entire country, and would greatly relieve the congested rail traffic and regulate the overland rates for the present generation, while the future will then have a standard demonstration, based upon experience, which will enable it to take care of itself without the burden of an enormous debt, due to inflated projects, or hampered by watered capital.

On the present route, a sixteen foot project can be carried across the Maryland-Delaware peninsula at a cost of a few million dollars, without interfering with the natural conditions of the channels at present existing in the approaches, and would fully justify the expenditure of a much larger sum. The work can unquestionably be completed in less time and for less cost by private parties than under the uncertain appropriations of the Government, and should it ever be required, it could readily be secured as has been done at the Sault Ste Marie, Louisville & Portland Canals, or the Monongahela River improvements with a well established traffic.



PAUCITY OF NATIONAL APPROPRIATIONS.

The difficulties attending the securing of appropriations for the various departments of the Government, may have had much influence in the failure to make an appropriation at this session, and it will not be less potent in the future; so that if the industrial, commercial and manufacturing developments of this country are to keep pace with those of other civilizations, the sooner they are divorced from entangling alliances with the National Treasury, the better.

THE NATIONAL POLICY

As waterways are a necessary auxiliary in the conduct of any business dependent upon transportation—and what business is not?—these interests will soon provide the necessary facilities as in the early days of the Republic, if the Government

will but pass a general law, instead of specific privileges to certain localities, as it has done recently, authorizing improvements of this class to be made by States, Municipalities, corporations or private parties, on their own initiative, and at their own cost, as was done so successfully prior to 1860, and has always been its well established policy in reference to the magnificent system of railways in this country which has no rival in the world.

The improvement of our common roads is also an illustration of the advisability of applying the same policy to our waterways.

The Government built the National pike to the Ohio, but soon abandoned that executive class of works to the States, and to private corporations, to the mutual advantage of all interests, and the experience of the past 40 years, in efforts to provide the entire country with deep, navigable channels from the public treasury, is sufficient to show that it is wholly inadequate to meet the demand, since nearly \$500,000,000 worth of approved projects are awaiting appropriations to-day.

MEASURES FOR RELIEF.

In view of these conditions, and the restraints and wasteful expenditures they impose on our business and manufactures, and of the utter impossibility of the railroads to meet the necessary demands for prompt and cheap deliveries of freight, which must be handled in small units, we believe the time has arrived for the inauguration of a more liberal policy with reference to the enlargement of our waterways, as has been so frequently set forth by The Trades League of Philadelphia; The Franklin Institute of Arts and Sciences; The Board of Trade of Massachusetts; The National Board of Trade, and many other influential organizations, interested in the symmetrical development of the whole Nation.

We, therefore, respectfully submit this Memorial, with its appended Resolutions, to the earnest consideration of His Excellency, the President of the United States, and to the Senate and House of Representatives, in Congress assembled.

WHEREAS, The large sums demanded of the General Government for the improvement of waterway projects, already approved, render it improbable that any relief may be secured for minor enterprises (lying within one or more adjacent States) for many years—

WHEREAS, The cost to the Government of maintaining the important major channels by dredging is increasing rapidly because of the greater depth required to meet the draught of ocean vessels—

WHEREAS, Such minor enterprises, although officially reported as being “unworthy of improvement” by the General Government, are still claimed to be subject to its jurisdiction and control, and thus may not be improved without special authority from Congress, which it requires many years to secure—

WHEREAS, The great commercial success of our foreign competitors is rendered possible by the authority given localities to make their own improvements under local control, and to levy tolls upon shipping—

WHEREAS, A similar policy prevailed in the United States prior to the Civil War, under which over 5000 miles of interior canals and rivers were improved, and which policy is still in successful operation in reference to highways and railroads, to the great benefit of the Nation—

WHEREAS, No improvements have been made by the Government in the coastwise water connections, between the great bays of the Atlantic, either for National defense or for interstate commerce; and the consideration of their proposed

enlargement by Congress, for many years, has operated to prevent their improvement by the corporations owning or leasing them; it is therefore

RESOLVED, By The Trades League of Philadelphia, That in justice to the great interests concerned, Congress be respectfully petitioned to give immediate and definite consideration to the report of the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal Commission, which was ordered to be submitted to the present Congress by His Excellency, the President of the United States.

RESOLVED, That if no practicable plan can be approved and authorized at this session, that Congress will authorize the proprietors of said Canal to proceed upon their own initiative and increase the capacity of this waterway without cost to the Government, subject to purchase, at any time twenty-five years after its enlargement, upon appraisement of the works and franchises as they may exist at that time.

RESOLVED, That, in general, authority be given to States, Municipalities, corporations or private parties, to make improvements, at their own cost and risk at minor localities, and also where the Government has reported them to be unworthy of improvement, and to charge tolls thereon for a period not less than 30, nor more than 40 years, subject to purchase, by condemnation, should the traffic or other conditions subsequently warrant it.

Respectfully submitted,

LEWIS M. HAUPT,

Chairman.

Attest:

N. B. KELLY,
Secretary.

THOMAS DEVLIN,

JOHN C. SULLIVAN,

E. L. BLABON,

DAVID P. LEAS,

Canal Committee.